

Message Text

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ACTION AID-59

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-25 ISO-00 ACDA-19 INT-08 COME-00

FDRE-00 IGA-02 EB-11 PC-15 SS-20 NSC-10 SCI-06

CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04 RSC-01 USIA-15

PRS-01 SPC-03 DRC-01 CEQ-02 /223 W

----- 081081

R 091300Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY DAKAR

TO SCSTATE WASHDC 5019

INFO AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY BANJUL

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AFDROUGHT

EO 11652N/A

PARIS FOR HELMAN

SUBJ: JOURNALIST CLAIRE STERLING INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT
SENGHOR

I. AT THE REQUEST OF RDO PRESIDENT SENGHOR GRANTED
MRS STERLING A FORTY-MINUTE INTERVIEW ON NOVEMBER 7.
THE FOLLOWING REPRESENTS HIGHLIGHTS OF PRESIDENT SENGHOR'S
RESPONSES TO MRS STERLING'S QUESTIONS WHICH FOCUSED
PRIMARILY ON 1) LONG TERM ASPECTS OF DROUGHT AND
DESERT ENCROACHMENT; 2) WHAT CAN BE LEARNED FROM THE RECENT
DROUGHT EXPERIENCE; 3) WHAT IS THE OUTLOOK FOR THE LONG TERM
MEASURES WHICH SHOULD BE UNDERTAKEN TO DEAL WITH THE DROUGHT.

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1. LONG TERM ASPECTS OF DROUGHT AND DESERT ENCHROACHMENT.

PRESIDENT SENGHOR SAID THAT THE PROBLEM MUST BE VIEWED FROM A HISTORICAL POINT OF VIEW. THE ARCHIVES REVEAL THAT AFRICA AND EUROPE (PERHAPS THE WORLD) WERE UNDERGOING A DROUGHT AT THE TIME OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION (1762-1770). THERE WAS A MAJOR DROUGHT IN 1913-14, IN 1941-42 AND IN 1966-73. THUS THE CYCLE OF SEVEN-YEAR DROUGHTS OCCURS EVERY HUNDRED YEARS AND TWO-YEAR DROUGHTS EVERY FOUR YEARS. AS TO THE EFFECTS OF THE RECENT DROUGHT AND DESERT ENCROACHMENT, HE SAID WE KNOW THAT MILLIONS OF TREES AND PLANTS HAVE DIED AND THIS IS THE CASE THROUGHOUT THE SUDANO-SAHELIAN ZONE." HE ALSO EMPHASIZED HIS FEELING THAT THE MASSIVE MASSACRE (DEFORESTATION) NOW TAKING PLACE IN THE IVORY COAST AND THE CAMEROONS AND GABON MAY ALSO AFFECT OUR DROUGHT CYCLES.

2. WHAT CAN BE LEARNED FROM RECENT EXPERIENCE.

PRESIDENT SENGHOR SAID "IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE BEGIN TO ATTACK THE PROBLEM ON A REGIONAL BASIS. I SUPPORTED THE IDEA PUT FORWARD BY THE US GOVERNMENT AT THE OUAGADOUGOU CONFERENCE TO ORGANIZE A CONFERENCE OF SCIENTISTS ON THE PROBLEMS OF DESERT ENCHROACHMENT AND HOPE THAT PRESIDENT NIXON REMAINS AS GENEROUS IN SPIRIT WITH ASSISTANCE FOR THIS CONFERENCE AS HE WAS IN EXTENDING HIS GESTURE OF CONGRATULATIONS TO ME RECENTLY FOR HAVING RECEIVED THE ETHIOPIAN PEACE PRIZE. WE ARE ANXIOUS FOR THE MAXIMUM IN US TECHNOLOGICAL INPUT. FOR EXAMPLE, IN SUPPORTING THE US PROPOSAL FOR A CONFERENCE OF SCIENTISTS IN THE WAYS OF COMBATING DESERT ENCROACHMENT WE ARE PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN ARTIFICIAL RAINMAKING TECHNIQUES (AN AREA IN WHICH THE US IS MOST ADVANCED) FOR IF WE CAN MAKE 100 MILLIMETERS OF RAIN ANNUALLY, WE ARE SAVED. SECONDLY, WE ARE VERY INTERESTED IN THE USE OF SATELLITE IMAGERY TO HELP DETERMINE THE EXTENT OF OUR WATER RESOURCES. THIRDLY WE ARE VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND ITS APPLICATIONS TO ECOLOGY. FOR EXAMPLE, FISHING WAS OUR NUMBER TWO INDUSTRY LAST YEAR AND WE ARE VERY ANXIOUS "THAT IT REMAINS SO"(NOTE:HE ALSO SPOKE OF THIS IN RELATION TO SUCH DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AS SENEGAL RIVER BASIN DAMS, INDICATING AN AWARENESS OF ECOLOGICAL

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COMPLEXITIES BEHIND SUCH PROJECTS.)
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3. MEASURES TO BE UNDERTAKEN ON A LONG TERM BASIS:

"THE FACT IS THAT EVEN BEFORE INDEPENDENCE WE WERE CONSCIOUS THAT DESERT ENCROACHMENT WAS A MAJOR PROBLEM. WE (SENEGAL, MALI, MAURITANIA AND GUINEA) SET UP THE INTER STATE COMMITTEE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SENEGAL RIVER BASIN IN 1958. THIS COMMITTEE WAS SUBSEQUENTLY REPLACED BY THE OERS (ORGANIZATION OF THE SENEGAL RIVER STATES) AND MOST RECENTLY, BY THE OMVS (SENEGAL RIVER DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY). THE PURPOSE OF THIS INSTITUTION IS TO DEVELOP OUR DEFENSE SYSTEM AGAINST DESERT ENCROACHMENT AND FOR THIS REASON WE GIVE PRIMARY IMPORTANCE TO THE DAMS PROPOSED FOR THE SENEGAL RIVER. I HAVE DECIDED, AND MY COLLEAGUES AGREE WITH ME, THAT THE GAMBIA SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THIS ORGANIZATION AND THE DECISION WILL BE FORMALLY APPROVED IN THE NEAR FUTURE. WE ENVISION SMALL DAMS AS IN UPPER VOLTA IN THE GAMBIA AND IN THE CASAMANCE AS AN ADDITIONAL STEP IN THE FIGHT AGAINST DESERT ENCROACHMENT. FURTHER WE WANT TO REFOREST OUR COUNTRY AND TO LAUNCH A PROGRAM OF

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DEEP WELLS. GEOLOGISTS AND HYDROLOGISTS TELL US THAT SENEGAL AND NIGER HAVE THE LARGEST UNDERGROUND WATER RESOURCES OF ANY OF THE SAHELIAN COUNTRIES. WE MUST IN A PLANNED WAY TAP THESE RESOURCES. AT OUR MEETING IN OUAGADOUGOU WE ADOPTED A MODEST PROGRAM OF 200 BILLION FRANCS WHICH INCLUDES ALL OF THESE PROJECTS."

II. IN CLOSING PRESIDENT SENGHOR THANKED MRS STERLING AND RDO FOR THE JOURNALIST'S VISIT AND HOPED THAT HER ARTICLE WOULD PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN SENSITIZING THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO BE RESPONSIVE TO THE PROGRAM ADOPTED AT OUAGADOUGOU.

III. NOTE: MRS STERLING DEPARTS DAKAR NOV 9 VIA MY 41 FOR BAMAKO; PLANS DEPART BAMAKO NOV 13 FOR TIMBUCTOO; ETD NOV 15 FOR GAO; ETD NOV 17/18 VIA CAR FOR NIAMEY; NOV 20/21 AGADEZ AND NOV 25 OUAGADOUGOU.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 NOV 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973DAKAR04997
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: DAKAR
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731145/aaaabgpx.tel
Line Count: 186
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION AID
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: collinp0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 JAN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <24-Jan-2002 by chappeld>; APPROVED <14 MAR 2002 by collinp0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: JOURNALIST CLAIRE STERLING INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT SENGHOR
TAGS: SWEL, EAGR, EAID, SG, (SENGHOR, LEOPOLD SEDAR)
To: n/a
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005